

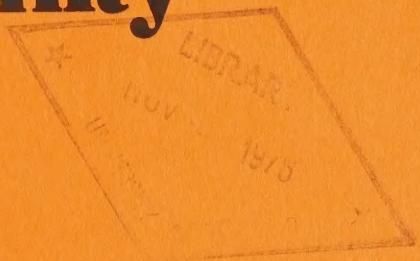
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# Papers on the Black Community



Ontario

Ministry of  
Culture and  
Recreation

Multicultural  
Development  
Branch

Hon. Robert Welch  
Minister  
Robert D. Johnston  
Deputy Minister



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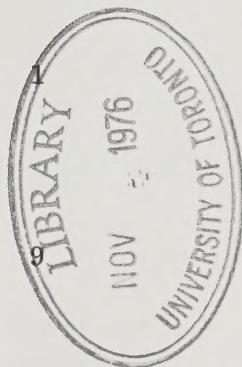
## PAPERS ON THE BLACK COMMUNITY

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REPORT ON THE INTERCULTURAL SEMINAR  
ON THE BLACK COMMUNITY

held at the Harriet Tubman Youth Centre

November 8, 1973

under the sponsorship of the Ontario Citizenship Branch

Purpose of Intercultural Seminar Series

The intercultural seminar on the Black community was the first of a series being conducted under the sponsorship of the Ontario Citizenship Branch. The purpose of these seminars is to develop among professionals an awareness of the cultural backgrounds of specific ethnic groups with a view to improving their understanding of the group and their services to it.

Program

Mr. Frank Moritsugu, Director of the Ontario Citizenship Branch and Dr. Daniel G. Hill, Chairman of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, acted as co-chairmen of the seminar. Two keynote speakers gave an overview of the Black community in Toronto, one a native Canadian and the other a West Indian. This was followed by a panel presented by nine Black persons with two each for the topics of education, employment, health and welfare services and three on law.

After discussion from the floor, a West Indian lunch was served.

In the afternoon the participants divided into nine workshop groups. Workshop leaders made brief reports during the plenary session and the seminar finished at 4:30 p.m.

## Discussions

The problems and issues raised by the keynote speakers and panelists were dealt with in depth in the group discussions summarized briefly below:

### a) Education

Many West Indian children speak a dialect and because of that their teachers have difficulty in understanding them. Hence the children are often put in a lower grade because of this handicap. Different remedies suggested for this problem were special language classes such as those conducted for other immigrant children, special instruction in linguistics for their teachers and more West Indian teachers.

West Indian parents often do not understand the school system here. They are not acquainted with the functions of the nurse, the guidance counsellor or the school psychologist. They are seriously concerned about the discipline in the schools and sometimes consider this as a lack of interest in their children by the teachers and as an indicator of racism on the part of society.

Too many Black children are streamed into vocational and technical schools which lead to low income jobs. How are they being evaluated? Can their potential be judged by tests designed for Canadian children?

West Indian children are unaccustomed to white teachers and hence find it difficult to go to them for help because white people have been traditionally regarded as oppressors. Much depends on teachers' attitudes. It is claimed that they often try to instill Canadian values in the children. Sometimes subtle prejudice exists but often there is poor communication on an emotional level between teacher and student.

It was advocated that the school curriculum should include a history of Black people to give their children a sense of identity and pride in their race. School libraries should have more text books presenting Black people in a positive way. For example, pictures of Blacks should include modern Blacks in a modern society and not just pygmies and bushmen.

A Black child in a classroom of white children often experiences extreme alienation. Some West Indian children are very sensitive about coming from a single parent family. The problem centres around the question: How can we build confidence in the Black child in school? This is very important as the crux of the problem is at the primary level where early

perceptions are formed. Hence there is a real need to pin down and identify school problems more specifically and to devise more definite methods of dealing with them.

b) Employment

Too often an employer resorts to "lack of Canadian experience" as an excuse to discriminate against non-white immigrants in employment. This form of discrimination is quite difficult to prove and in many cases employers get away with it. (See attached report from Globe and Mail, Appendix A).

Immigrants from the West Indies tend to have experienced a different system of education and occupational training, hence they often encounter problems in Canadian acceptance of their educational qualifications and professional training. Often many are unskilled and constant rejection for jobs by employers tends to make them disheartened. As a result, out of a sense of futility they do not bother to try to upgrade their skills.

Discrimination exists in employment, in both hiring and promotional practices but this is often hard to prove as it is manifested in subtle forms and variations. This is a reflection of prejudice in the community. Although a Human Rights Code exists, there is still resistance to it on the part of the community.

The point system as presently used by Canadian immigration authorities in assessing prospective immigrants results in a brain drain from the West Indies. It was advocated that there should be more opportunity for unskilled West Indians to come here.

c) Health and Welfare Services

Many West Indians tend to leave children behind with relatives when they come to Canada and then send for them later when they are established and can care for them better. The children may be separated from parents for a number of years and when re-united a parent may have remarried and the child is more often than not a stranger in the family. Hence the child in such a situation has many adjustments to make with no familial support.

Special agencies often lack any knowledge of child-rearing practices in the West Indies. As a result, counselling is ineffective.

Children's Aid Societies have great difficulty in placing Black infant children who come into their care. There are not enough Black foster homes. Children tend to be happier when placed in Black homes where child-rearing practices are those to which they have been accustomed. They are not so alienated as in white homes and the need to learn about their own culture to have a sense of identity is emphasized.

Day care for children of working mothers is badly needed and some West Indian mothers mistrust the day care centres. They prefer the care of the extended family and may send the children back home. It was suggested that day care centres run by the West Indian community might be more acceptable to them.

It was claimed that mental illness in the Black community is higher among the unskilled than the skilled and higher among the younger people than the older.

The Black population is a young population with a preponderance of females. There are many single parent families and consequently women assume heavy responsibilities. They encounter many problems in relation to child-rearing and male-female relationships.

There are few well-thought-out studies on mental health among Blacks and information which has been gathered is not easily available.

#### d) Law

West Indians generally are accustomed to laws that are different to those in Canada and sometimes get into difficulty because of this. Often behaviour which is acceptable at home in the West Indies is not here. For instance, people here may complain that their West Indian neighbours are disturbing them through excessive noise when the latter are merely enjoying themselves as they did at home.

Quite a few West Indian children have been moved from the West Indies to Britain and from Britain to Canada. As they may have spent extended periods away from parents at different times they cannot make all the adjustments expected of them at home and at school. They start to play truant, make the wrong kind of friends, get into gangs and then come into contact with the law. They often do not know what is permissible and what is not in the new society.

#### e) Other Comments

It was claimed that the Black man in Canada is regarded as an "eternal migrant." Even after two generations, Blacks are still asked where they come from. For them the feeling of belonging and a sense of being Canadian is elusive.

Although the West Indies can be regarded as a geographical unit there are many differences among its people in terms of race, colour and economic status. Hence a key to the understanding of the West Indian community is the understanding of their differences.

The middle class West Indians usually adjust fairly well to Canadian society, but those on the lower scale of the economic ladder tend to experience severe problems of alienation in a dominant white society.

The Black participants claimed that the media often pick up incidents which tend to portray Blacks unfavourably. The white participants in the seminar suggested that Blacks were over sensitive. Blacks however, felt that their sensitivity had a realistic basis and that non-Blacks do not realize how often they encounter prejudice.

Immigration officials at the point of entry are the immigrants' first contact with the new country and sometimes their attitude is quite negative even though their own Department selected the newcomers in the first place.

The seminar participants felt that there should be more seminars of this kind involving Black people and other immigrant groups.

#### Comments

It is generally agreed that the Black seminar was a highly successful affair. The response from professionals to the workshop was most encouraging, so much so that it was necessary to refuse applications two days immediately preceding it because of space limitations. A good spirit prevailed during the day. Presentations of keynote speakers and panelists were excellent; lunch was exceptionally good; discussions were animated and participants were quite enthusiastic.

## Attendance

The total number of people who attended the seminar was one hundred and forty-nine. The breakdown of participants in terms of their institutional representation is as follows:

Department of Manpower and Immigration	5
Unemployment Insurance Commission	1
Ontario Citizenship Branch	11
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education	3
Ontario Human Rights Commission	4
Ontario Housing Corporation	3
Ontario Labour Relations Board	1
Ontario Industrial Training Branch	2
Ontario Probation and Parole Services	4
Ontario Legal Aid Plan	1
Metro Separate School Board	5
Toronto Board of Education	9
York Board of Education	5
Faculty of Education, University of Toronto	3
Social Welfare Department, Atkinson College	1
Department of Sociology, Ryerson Polytechnical	1
Wilfred Laurier University	1
Language Training Division, George Brown CAAT	1
Black Education Project	1
Brotherhood Community Centre Project	3
Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto	1
Earlscourt Community Centre	2
Workmen's Compensation Board	2
West End Y. M. C. A.	1
Catholic Family Services	1
Indian Immigrant Aid Services	1
Interfaith Immigration Council	1
Victorian Order of Nurses	3
York Board of Health	3
National Black Coalition of Canada	1
School Principals	4
Vice-Principals	1
School Teachers	20
Metro Toronto Police	3

Children's Aid Society of Metro Toronto	8
International Institute of Metro Toronto	1
Harriet Tubman Youth Centre	1
National Law Reform Commission	1
Volunteer Bureau of Metro Toronto	1
Social Services Department of Metro Toronto	6
Big Brothers Association	2
Big Sisters Association	1
Toronto Western Hospital	2
St. Michael and All Angels Anglican Church	1
Toronto Planning Board	1
Youth Employment Service	1
"The Coffee House" (Black Drop-in Centre)	1
St. Christopher	1

December 19, 1973.

For additional copies of this report, please contact:

Multicultural Development Branch,  
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 400 University Avenue, 24th floor,  
 Toronto, Ontario M7A 2R9

965-4331



## CALL FOR CANADIAN JOB EXPERIENCE CITED AS A RACIST DEVICE OF SOME EMPLOYERS

By Arnold Bruner

The Globe and Mail, Wednesday, November 26, 1975

The Ontario Human Rights Commission has been asked to crack down on employers who demand Canadian experience as a condition of employment.

Employers in growing numbers are using the condition as a device to practice illegal racial discrimination, although they may be technically within the law, according to the Canadian Civil Liberties Association.

A commission spokesman said yesterday that the Government agency had been investigating the "phenomenon" for a month on its own because it is "rearing its head with alarming frequency." But the rights agency has not decided if it will take action under Ontario's human rights laws.

Separate surveys of job advertisements in Toronto's three major newspapers by the association and The Globe and Mail found Canadian experience up to 10 years "essential" or required for such jobs as: secretary, electrician, salesman, office clerk, bookkeeper, stenographer, accounts receivable supervisor, laboratory technician, mechanic, receptionist-typist, agrologist, tool and die maker and file clerk.

Two to three years of Canadian experience is the most frequent minimum cited, but five years is not uncommon. One firm demanded five years residence in Toronto for a stenographer's job.

The Globe and Mail checked its own classified advertising columns and those of The Toronto Star and The Toronto Sun for one day last week and found 25 asking in various ways for Canadian experience. Five were in the Globe, 13 in the Star and seven in the Sun.

In the civil liberties association survey, the job columns were checked periodically for three months and letters were written to advertisers asking why Canadian experience was needed.

Twelve replies formed the basis of a letter sent this week to Dr. Thomas Symons, chairman of the Ontario Human Rights Commission. It says that the former chairman, Dr. Daniel Hill, warned a few years ago that "a growing number of employers were practising unlawful discrimination under the guise of requiring Canadian experience from their job applicants."

The letter, from Alan Borovoy, the CCLA general counsel, said present practices show "the wisdom of this warning."

While such a job requirement is not unlawful in itself, he said "it can readily be used to accomplish unlawful objectives." Even where there is no intention to discriminate, he said, the effect is the same, because "not many newcomers to this country are likely even to apply for jobs where 'Canadian experience' is stipulated."

In both surveys, a number of employers reached by mail or telephone said the stipulation in their ads was a mistake or unnecessary. Others held the job could not be done by people without Canadian experience unless they were specially trained.

One advertiser admitted in a telephone interview that the intent was discriminatory. She represents an accounting firm.

"A lot of our clients do not want immigrants" she said. "I'm very prejudiced. I have to admit this. We've had a lot of them in here and they can't do what they say they do."

The CCLA said that although seven employers who replied to its queries created "difficulty" their replies could not by themselves be taken as evidence of discrimination.

A reply from Lindzon Ltd. of Spadina Avenue said it required Canadian experience for an office position because "we wish someone who had already worked in an office in Canada."

Lourden Taylor required someone with Canadian sales experience for its Yonge Street clothing store because "our clients are all Canadian and speak only English."

The Association called on the Commission to monitor all newspapers in Ontario continuously.

Dr. Hill, now a private consultant to governments and the University of Toronto, said it called for a massive counter-campaign within the community.

"The Human Rights Commission should be given the necessary resources to fight it."

He first became aware of the problem as Commission head, he said, when a Black applicant complained he was rejected as a dishwasher because he lacked Canadian experience.

The manager of classified advertising at The Globe and Mail said the newspaper would continue to accept such advertising until the Commission ruled it was illegal.

Although the Globe has in the past decided to exclude other types of advertising on its own initiative, where the Human Rights Code is concerned, according to Harry Outhet, "If there is a loophole, who are we to make new laws?"

Ed Demchuk, manager of classified advertising at the Star, said he was seeking clarification of policy as a result of the call from a Globe reporter. "We don't blanket-veto Canadian experience in advertising" he said, "but we do discourage it."

For additional copies of this report, please contact:

Multicultural Development Branch,  
Ministry of Culture and Recreation,  
400 University Avenue, 24th floor,  
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2R9

965-4331



GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER :  
THE WEST INDIES

an address given by Anne-Marie Stewart

at the Black Intercultural Seminar

held at the Harriet Tubman Youth Centre

November 8, 1973

Before I begin I want to make two things clear:

- 1) The West Indies is a geographical, historical and political term of definition. I will use it when I'm talking about the location, history and settlement of the region. Once I get into the Sociology of the region and I am talking about the people who live (and leave) there now, I can no longer talk about a great glob-- The West Indies and West Indians. For there are all sorts of critical differences which will arise:
  - island
  - race, colour and shade
  - class
  - economic
- 2) I'm going to talk about us, the people of the region, in the third person, not because I want to set myself apart from myself, but because I will find it less difficult to be here, exposing some things to non-West Indians, if I de-personalize it in this way.

I have a friend in Trinidad, the kind of person the press tends to call "a young radical economist" who, whenever I ask him about any contemporary problems in the West Indies, becomes very ponderous and says: "Well, Anne-Marie, you've got to go back to the ships."

He means the ships of Columbus, and even though each time he says so, I become exasperated, he is making a very valid point there. For in fact, the problems that face the West Indians at home and abroad --that make them decide to leave, and that don't go away even when they emigrate, start there--with the ships.

Columbus arrived in the region--he didn't discover it, there were lots of Arawak and Carib Indians there when he arrived--and he set in motion a whole pattern of colonization and exploitation in which the major imperial forces--British, French, Spanish, Dutch took part. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries these powers squabbled, fought over, traded, captured and ceded these islands to each other. The West Indies were desirable treasure troves. Sugar was a high-priced commodity, and it was grown there. Plantation societies developed there. Millions of Africans were taken there as slaves. Other people, from all over the world, went there: East Indians, Chinese, Syrians, Dutch, English, French, Spanish, Irish, Scots, Germans. They were masters, slaves, political dissenters, criminals, fugitives from justice, utopian dreamers, entrepreneurs of every persuasion. At that time there was very little emigration, lots of immigration.

And the problems that grew up in these polyglot societies have never gone away. All sorts of power structures and dependency blocs were set up. The regions were governed from abroad. Rich people were in control of poor people, of course, but the rich people were the white people, and the poor people were originally African slaves (later joined by indentured East Indians). And although by the beginning of this century there were other racial mixtures among the poor West Indians, the poor in the West Indies continue to be largely of African descent. So that even after the abolition of slavery, and even now, when there are nation states like Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados, there are still in the West Indies, large numbers of poor Black people, some people who still have too much control of too many things--these are white or white-ish people, and a sizeable enough racially mixed, middle-income class of people which values itself in terms of living like and with, white people, in terms of knowing all the different ways they may use to keep the poor and Black people in their place.

I'm not going to say very much today about the multiracial, middle class people from the West Indies who come to Canada. They fit quite easily into this society and from all reports, they just love it here. I'm going to talk about those lower income people, whose dreams can hardly be fulfilled in the West Indies. These people dream of living as they see the West Indian middle class living, and the middle class lives as North America dictates: big cars, colour TVs, split level homes and lots of appliances. These people need to make money so that opportunities may become available for them and for their children. They want to have options, not only on the material quality of their lives, but also on acquiring skills or professions. They want to be able to give their children an education which they believe will ensure them better lives, so that they will never know what it is like not to be white and to be poor.

Up to 1964, this kind of person was still a British subject, and went mainly to England. Canada took students and professionals. In England he filled jobs that English people didn't like to do, but in 1964, Great Britain began introducing some most stringent and openly racist immigration laws, which gradually not only closed off Britain as a land of opportunity for West Indian migrants, but also contributed to the development of rank hostility to non-whites in England. As Canada gradually started to relax her immigration policy towards West Indians, and to encourage others besides students and professionals (for here, too, there were jobs that Canadians didn't want to do) thousands of West Indians--men, women and families--skilled, partially-skilled, and non-skilled, came in as landed immigrants, both from the West Indies and from Great Britain. Within the past year, Canada's immigration policy has changed again - but that is not my story.

Now the first thing you've got to get straight about these people is that, on the surface, their heritage is very little different from the Canadian WASP. In the West Indies, the major colonizing force was British, and even though there are regional dialects, English is their first language. The contemporary dominant popular culture is North American. This is unloaded onto the society by foreign-owned and foreign-oriented advertising; canned TV: The Cartwrights, Mannix, Lucy and their friends, and by D-grade American movies. So that their aspirations tend to differ little from those of this society.

Where, then, do the problems arise?

First, colour or race: whatever you choose to call it. These people are not white and even though the definition Black now no longer seems to upset anybody, and Canadians may think they are very with it and liberal to call them Black, they have lived for so long with the negative attributes of blackness: within the subtle gradations of skin-shade, race... embarrassed by their skin, their hair, their noses, their lips... that a great deal of their self esteem is based on their denying these characteristics, which in almost all the islands are inextricably linked with the people's social and economic situations. So you will find that older West Indians who came here to better themselves, who have spent all their lives struggling to achieve in spite of being Black, and who think that too much associating with other Black people can do no good, are at total variance with the new breed of Black who wears an Afro, seems to be militantly proud of being Black, who prefers the company of other Black brothers and sisters and who behaves as if he is in Canada just for a change of scenery.

On the other hand because they are non white, whether they would prefer to be or not, they are up against a wall of misunderstanding and prejudice in this country. Whether it is intended or not. And it doesn't take a West Indian too long to discover this. I'm sure the panellists to come will go into this further. What I want to deal with briefly are the kinds of defences they erect to protect their dignity and self-esteem.

I was quite surprised one day last week to discover that the Canadians I have lunch with interpret the bland stare and reticence of the West Indian lady, Sheila, who serves us in the cafeteria, as sullenness. When one of my colleagues asked me why Sheila was like that, I laughed and said maybe she is feeling cold, and they marvelled at how I laugh so much, just like those happy people one of them met in Barbados last April. You see, "island people" laugh a lot.

Maybe here I should say a little about stereotypes, though I have to get back to Sheila afterwards. In spite of popular belief here, there is no West Indian stereotype. Island stereotypes are barely perceivable and I will give you some idea of the Jamaican and Trinidadian personalities and say briefly what could have formed them. Perhaps, in later discussion, other island peculiarities will come up.

Among West Indians, Jamaicans are usually known to be serious people. The island has a fairly rigid class system. The British colonized it for 300 years. People of African descent form the largest percentage of the population; there are very few other races and mixtures. The religion is Protestant. It is the largest West Indian island (three times as big as Trinidad, which comes next in size) and it has a large, stable, rural, peasant population. These factors have made the typical Jamaican immigrant a conservative, proud Black person who believes in the goodness of education, hard work and God. Long before nationalism had percolated through to the southern Caribbean, the Jamaican government, in 1955, was sloganizing Be Jamaican, Buy Jamaican. Jamaica is the most northern of the West Indian Islands, and only within the last fifteen years has Jamaica looked southward to the other islands for regional cooperation.

Trinidad is furthest south of the islands. Trinidadians think Jamaicans are funny (ha-ha) people and they say so whether Jamaicans are within earshot or not. At various times in Trinidad's history, it has been owned and settled by the English, the Spanish and the French (this before the present de facto colonialism by the United States and Canada). The dominant religion is Roman Catholic. The people are of every possible race and colour imaginable. These qualities combine to produce a rather cosmopolitan person, who tends to overstate his capabilities rather than put them to the test. Trinidadians are proud of their natural resources: oil, asphalt and Carnival. They're not lazy but they don't strive too hard, for history has taught them that there are all sorts of variables that come together in Trinidad, to conspire against achievement: race, colour, shade, education, money, politics, who their fathers were not, and even at the ends of their lives, an implacable Roman Catholic God.

But to get back to Sheila: we left off at the happy island laughter. Somebody then said that if Sheila doesn't like the cold why does she stay here? If she were from the islands, she says, she wouldn't be here. Another asked what I'm doing here when the islands need trained people so badly that all those wonderful CUSO people have to go out there.

For this occasion, I will offer some speculative answers to the questions they have raised.

Sheila may, like so many West Indian women who now live in Canada, have a child. She may, or may not, be married. Let us assume she is not married, and that she's from Trinidad. Even though not being married is no big social crime in the West Indies (in fact, there is a good deal of common law marriage), because a marriage morality is imposed by the church, and because the social morals that stem from this, are enforced by the middle class, it is unlikely that Sheila would ever get the break that she dreams of for her child if she were to stay on that little island. In addition, there are very few job opportunities for an unskilled woman (and there are tens of thousands of these in the West Indies); there are even fewer opportunities for training. These are the kinds of considerations which would make Sheila decide to get out.

Let us assume that Sheila is from Jamaica and has a husband. He left Jamaica in the late fifties for England, promising Sheila he'd send for her. In England he trained to be a welder; he made good enough money which he would send home for Sheila and their daughter. When the racism emerged in London, he came to Canada and his family joined him there. He feels less uncomfortable in Toronto, he says--cleaner place, central heating, higher wages possible. Of course, even though he is a highly skilled welder he has had frustrating problems with "Canadian experience and certification." He still isn't doing the kind of work a man of his experience and training should be doing. However, would they own the house they now do, if they had stayed in Jamaica? And would their daughter be going to university next year to do medicine?

Their daughter: It is very likely that they are already having problems with her. This may well be the reason for Sheila's baleful look at the young men and women who chatter their way past her in the cafeteria. West Indian parents are stern and authoritarian, and when faced with North American permissiveness they tend to become unrelentingly strict. You will no doubt discuss this later on too.

My time is limited. However, there is one other situation that I feel I should mention, and it is one that all West Indians know so well that I would be dishonest to call it a speculation. It is the alienation, isolation and anonymity that almost every West Indian feels, in a country like Canada. The West Indian, rich or poor, from Jamaica to Trinidad, from the towns or from the country districts, is accustomed to the interdependence of the extended family relationship and to every day being a summer's day. For no matter how extreme in poverty, there still is, in the West

Indies, a closeness of community life and a lack of the kind of stress that is generated in a society where people are cramped in little high-rise boxes, their days dominated by the whims of the weather, and their lives driven by an unquestioned work-ethic. How does an immigrant begin to talk about this to somebody, ostensibly there to help him, who even as he searches for words to explain himself says "I beg your pardon." Communication is a difficult thing when the unspoken assumptions on either side are so engrained.

I hope I have given you some kind of framework into which you may fit issues and questions that will arise during the day. I am well aware that I still haven't speculated about why I'm here and why those CUSO people are there. Maybe somebody will do it for me later in the day.



## BLACKS IN TORONTO

by Stanley George S. Grizzle

Co-chairmen Mr. Frank Moritsugu and Dr. Daniel G. Hill, Miss Marlene Green, Miss Edith Ferguson, Mr. Jay Jackson and your co-workers, permit me to commend you and the organization you represent - The Brotherhood Community Centre Project, Inc. for organizing this seminar under the aegis of the citizenship Branch, Ministry of Community and Social Services, Government of Ontario. (Now the Multicultural Development Branch, Ministry of Culture and Recreation.)

I note the purpose of this first of seminar series is to acquaint persons, particularly professionals, whose clientele includes immigrants, with background culture and adjustment problems of specific ethnic groups. This seems to me to be a very timely program.

The fact that this first seminar involves the Black community is an indication that whoever parented this brain child recognizes that those persons of high visibility have the most difficulty adjusting to the prejudices extant in a white majority society.

A couple of weeks ago, I read in the Toronto Star a book review by Robert Fulford on W. O. Mitchell's book entitled The Vanishing Point . His opening statements were, "One of the great moral prohibitions of our time is directed against frank talk about race. Every period in history has its self-imposed secrets, those thoughts and feelings we can't bear to state openly. Race seems a particularly striking one. People of previous eras, if they could examine our time, would point this out as a genuine oddity.

In the past half century, race and sex have changed places in our public conversation, one of them disappearing while the other surfaces. In the 1920's people in Canada said more or less what they thought about race - if they didn't like this or that for some reason they said so. But they rarely expressed themselves honestly about sex.

In the 1970's, on the other hand, most people feel free to talk about sex, but race is a forbidden subject. If you don't like the members of some race, you express yourself only in private, if at all. To state racial prejudice openly is to reveal yourself as a cultural freak. Most people would rather be accused of homosexuality than racism . It is for these aforestated reasons that I have decided not to talk about race but instead to talk about sex.

No history of Black people anywhere on this mundane sphere can be written or spoken without discussing their struggles against the forces of prejudice and discrimination.

An overview of the Black Community in Toronto is the topic I have been asked to discuss with you. Black people have lived in this area, now called Toronto since about 1790 - Toronto was incorporated as a city in 1834. They came here both as freedmen seeking a better life and as slaves from the United States of America. In the 18th century there were just a few hundred slaves in Canada. In 1793 the first parliament of Ontario passed An Act to Prevent the Further Introduction of Slaves and to Limit the Term of Forced Servitude within this Province . This legislation remained in force until 1834 when slavery was abolished in all parts of the British Empire.

Records reveal that Negroes served this country 'very acceptably' in every war to which Canada sent troops.

In the 1820's and 1830's with an increase in abolitionist activities, escaped slaves and Black freedmen from the United States of America entered Toronto in more significant numbers. W. R. Abbott, born in Richmond, Virginia, in 1801 came to Toronto in 1835 after having become fatigued from restraint - the reason many U.S. Blacks have come to Canada. Abbott's story is fascinating. But suffice it is to say he became a successful real estate owner, tobacco shop operator and politician serving St. Patrick's ward as an alderman. He died in 1876.

In 1837 at least fifty families of refugees settled in Toronto, mostly from Virginia, where they were barbers, waiters, cooks and house servants.

The oldest Negro institution in the city is the First Baptist Church, founded in 1826. Having been in several locations it now stands at Huron and D'arcy streets.

Between 1838 and 1847 several churches were founded, including the African Methodist Episcopal Church which showed a membership of 128 persons in 1851.

In 1851 a historic conference was held in Toronto in St. Lawrence Hall (now Centre) by the North American Convention of Coloured Freemen from the northern United States and England. Here they decided to make Canada the centre of anti-slavery activity. Among the convention leaders were Josiah Henson, the central figure in the novel 'Uncle Tom's Cabin', and H. C. Bibb.

In the period 1864-65 the city directory showed 141 Negroes made up of 57 labourers, 60 skilled tradesmen (including 10 waiters), 4 restaurateurs, 2 tavern owners, a minister and a law student.

There were also Black newspapers in the 19th century. All in all there appeared to be a vibrant Black community in the early days. The time allotted to me does not allow me to touch on any more early history.

Many Blacks drifted back across the southern border in the latter part of the 1800's. The Black population of Canada in the 1911 census was 16,994. Toronto's Black population in 1927 was some 3,000 souls.

I recall asking my mother many years ago why she decided to leave Jamaica and come to Canada and she replied, "Dem seh money grow pon tree in Canada." My father, also Jamaican born, and mother married in Toronto around 1917. They raised seven children of which I was the eldest, being born in 1918. Thus, in the famous depression years of the 1930's I was a teenager.. But to the local Blacks this depression was not felt by them because no job, arrearage in rent, scarcity of food and clothing was the norm, since Blacks were the last hired and the first fired. It is said that 90% of Blacks had no regular employment. As a matter of fact, we were so poor we did not have any cockroaches.

In those days public places such as skating rinks and dance halls were closed to Blacks. There were no laws outlawing discrimination. I never saw a Black teacher in school, policeman, politician, fireman, secretary, nurse, store clerk or cashier, civil servant or union official. There were

a couple of barbers, one doctor and one lawyer. No matter what the educational level, a Black man ended up on the railroad as a sleeping car porter.

In those days, we were regularly referred to as nigger, darky, coon, coloured or negro but never Black. Black was distasteful because it had connotations of being colonials, powerlessness, weakness, evil and Black mythology which said that Blacks smell bad, they are oversexed - that is a hell of a combination. This oversexed thing always bothered me because I could never figure out how we could be oversexed and still be a minority. Now, with the many independent African governments and their heads of state all being Black, Blackness has taken on a more positive aura and respectability and now Black is the in thing.

From the early 1900's, the Black populace concentrated in the area bounded by Front, Bloor, Dovercourt, and Sherbourne Streets. This was partly because the railroad station being at Front and Bay Streets made it handy for the porters and those who hoped to become porters to commute to and from work. Now with a much larger population, greater job and housing opportunities and healthier attitudes, Blacks are spread out into every corner of Metro Toronto.

Not completing high school and being the eldest child, I quit school and went to work doing odd jobs such as shopping, washing and waxing floors and delivering newspapers for the Black elites of our community - the porters and their wives who had no family. In 1940 the Canadian Pacific Railway Company hired me as a porter (sleeping car) at about \$75.00 per month, for which I worked up to 400 hours. On this job I found many American and West Indian born Blacks with good education - some university graduates who could find no other job and thus made beds and shined shoes for a living. These world travellers and men of wisdom I found informative and inspiring. By the way, I have yet to see a Black train engineer, fireman or train conductor in Canada.

In 1943 the Canadian Pacific Railway Company porters joined the International Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, AFL-CIO. Up to this time porters had absolutely no rights the CPR were bound to respect. A. Philip Randolph's union gave to the porter for the first time job security, reduced his work hours, increased his wages and above all gave him some dignity.

If you check the B.S.C.P.'s convention proceedings you will find resolutions passed at successive conventions of the union urging federal, state and provincial governments to enact Fair Employment Practices - legislation outlawing discrimination in jobs on the basis of colour, race, national origin, creed or ancestry. In 1953 Canada's national government passed into law the Canada Fair Employment Practices Act - the exact language used in the resolutions. Thus, this is the gift of the porters to Canada and the United States of America.

Of course we didn't do it alone. We joined hands and hearts with other communities in agitating for this legislation.

As president of the local union we were called upon to take to church pulpits, radio, television, press teaching, reaching and preaching out against minstrel shows, derogatory stories in school books, racism in Canada's immigration policies and in jobs and housing.

Because of increasing complaints about Blacks being refused jobs, housing and accommodation we joined other labour, civic, church and other groups in a deputation to the Ontario government cabinet in 1956 urging the enactment of strong anti-discrimination laws which came about shortly thereafter.

These laws did not wipe out prejudice and its twin, discrimination. They helped to bring this community illness to the surface and more than ever before put the matter on the agenda for public dialogue, debate and discussion. The laws are administered by the Ontario Human Rights Commission - one of the finest anywhere. It also has done a fairly good educational job, with Dr. Dan Hill at the helm.

In my opinion, which I am sure you share, immigration from the West Indies, United States, Asia and Europe and so on has been good for you and for me as well as the immigrant. We have been afforded many pleasures because of our new contacts and new experiences. The varied life style as seen in foods, dress and entertainment; various shades of skin; variety in eye slants; musically speaking accents and new places to spend vacations - all have made life more beautiful. Immigration has underscored for us that peoples of different parts of the world basically have more in common than difference. We suffer the same aches and pains for the same reasons and we have the same hopes and aspirations.

But what about today's Toronto Black community, made up of people of so many different cultural backgrounds? Do they have any problems? Here are the observations:

#### Education

1. There is a fear that Black students are being misdirected by teachers and guidance counsellors into vocational or trade school and thus a lower income class is being built up in our community.
2. Too little is being done to make students aware of the contributions which have been made by Blacks to social progress.

#### Employment

1. Discrimination in employment is by no means solved.
2. There is a strong feeling that Blacks are not being promoted on the job in accordance with their experience and qualifications - both in private industry and government service, both federally and provincially.
3. Concomitantly, it should be observed at this juncture that the Ontario government is by far the best employer in the country in this respect.

#### Health and Welfare

More store-front information centres are needed to make more accessible information on drug use and as to the fact that persons below a certain income tax level are not required to pay OHIP premium.

#### The Law

Because of some personal involvement I have had, it re-emphasized for me that no profession or institution in this country is free from racism or bigotry. And the police departments - being made up of people - are no exception. Many allegations of racist and rough handling by police have been heard; however, Black citizens working with community relations police officers seem to have improved the situation somewhat.

## Human Rights Code

1. Because of what appears to be greater resistance against the code, new techniques and approaches will have to be thought of with a view to getting the public to obey the letter and spirit of the law.
2. Too many persons are refusing to come forward and file a complaint. What solutions are there for this problem?
3. The recent Ontario Government sponsored mission to South Africa (Union) has raised honest fears and almost panic in the hearts of many of us who suspect that the government is losing some enthusiasm for its own human rights policies as reflected through the Code. This indicates that they need some sensitizing as to attitudes of Blacks and other people of good will on the question of putting money in the pockets of people who have a world wide reputation for practicing against Blacks the most vicious forms of apartheid and discrimination. Our own rhetoric and public policy now being ignored makes us some sort of schizophrenics.

## The Media

The manner in which the official press reports the news is disturbing to those of us who are making a study of their news reporting. For instance, there is an official conspiracy of silence editorially and in reporting the public statements of Blacks on our government's mission to South Africa. The whole situation could add up to a form of intimidation to those persons who would otherwise speak out on this critical moral crisis. In addition, the public at large is now left with the false impression that all Blacks are in accord with the mission or have no interest in the matter, being too busy at their televisions watching football or footpatting to soul music - the stereotype image again.

And so my friends I hope that I have used the time allotted to me to stimulate your thoughts and given you some food for thought.

Thank you very much.

For additonal copies of this report, please contact:

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